

GERHARDT

Introduction to the profitable
treatment of blind children in
their family circle.

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HOUSE FOR THE BLIND**

Introduction to the profitable treatment of blind children in their family circle from earliest childhood up to their admittance into the blind institute.

The blind child in its 1st year :

Just as with normal children, we differ in the treatment of blind children according to their different ages. In general we follow the rule, that the blind child should not be treated differently from the normal child. The use of education, the development of a dormant strength of spirit and body to self-reliance is the same educational idea in both schools.

Only the means to the attainment of this end, are somewhat different. That the education should begin with the infant, will not be respected by many parents. The inclinations and characteristics that are unwittingly sucked in with the mother's milk often influence the entire existence. This is a challenge to mothers to impart to their children love and mildness and not the poison of tumultuous passions.

Already 6 to 8 weeks after the birth, the normal child awakes to consciousness when he recognizes his mother. His first conception is the understanding of the smiling face of his mother. The child opens its tender arms towards his happy mother, and smiles in return. He recognizes his mother through the eye. Not so the blind child. His eye is veiled and unable to lead the mirrored images of the outer world into its inner consciousness. Living in the light he is still excluded from the realm of light. He is even deprived of the first photograph of every being--the loving face of his mother. Could he for that reason suffer the loss of love? Should he spiritually starve without the comforting light of ^{his} mother love. Never! He has a right to mother love, and will

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experience it later and more slowly through the ear. The sense of hearing in the child awakens later than the sense of sight. But as soon as this sense awakens, the child learns to hear the mother-love that it cannot see. The tone of her voice, is his sun. As soon as the child begins to attach some understanding to the impressions of hearing, the outerworld must become unlocked to him in this way. One must read busily to the child with varying inflection, sing simple songs to him, or play to him on an instrument, perhaps simple, soft-sounding tunes on a harmonica. In this the mother's love will show her the way. The heart will make her resourceful to find means to reach the heart of the child through the medium of the ear. The results will not be wanting and the true mother will be rewarded. The first smile in the face of the blind infant proves, that the sunray of her love has fallen upon his veiled inner world, that light is beginning to penetrate the darkness. One should be very careful not to let the child hear loud laments concerning his fate. The child who is blind from earliest infancy does not know what he lacks, and is gay and happy in his ignorance. How gruesome it would be to awaken him from this happy dream in which he has immersed himself. The lack which he does not feel cannot disturb his contentment and inner joy. Are we unhappy because we cannot fly? Or do we lament because we do not possess the attributes of higher beings. The child does not use the concept "seeing" and "not seeing". He does not know light, and its power and does not miss it. It is an irremediable mistake to reiterate with sighs and tears how unhappy and pathetic the poor blind one is, and what a burden he is to his people. It is godless to murmur against God's providence. It is godless too, to pose the question in the child's presence, "Why God creates and keeps alive such beings?". Stand erect, parents of blind children,

in the thought that godly wisdom will manifest itself in the life of the blind child, that the blind child has its function and will be authorized to take to himself the wonderful light that God has sent the world in Jesus Christ. Be consoled in the comforting knowledge that often the well brought up blind child, grows up to be the joy and pride of its parents, while often seeing children have brought their parents much sorrow, and have been much less fine than the blind child in every respect. Be sure, however, not to give up in the fatiguing work of bringing up the blind, but do with all your heart the best you can, the best that one could ask you as parents.

The Blind Childs Learning of Speech:

People often ask which is the unhappier, the blind or the deaf. If one thinks of those who have been blind or deaf from the day they were born, the answer would be easy, because the deaf born does know how to speak. The great gift of speech gives to the spiritual development and social standing of the blind, a great advantage over the deaf. Nature and mankind, knowledge and art, past and future are all disclosed to him through hearing and speech. The father and mother are his first teachers who teach him the mother tongue and lead him to life and open to him the possibilities of intercourse with his kind. The important thing is that the blind child will learn speech in the same way and at the same time as the normal child, because it can hear, and imitate the tones it hears. One should read to him *often*, being careful as to the correctness of pronunciation and diction and should give named objects to the child to hold, so that it can associate sound with the conception of a certain form, Soon one will be delighted to find that with the *urge* of speech is born the desire to think. Thus the road that leads to the spiritual world of the child is

bridged, and now all pictures from the outer world can reach his inner consciousness. It is often said that the blind see with their ears. He must sink into dull brooding if he does not receive some impressions through the ear. The parents are there for the child only in so far and in so long as he hears them. The child should get many mild comforting impressions through the ear. In the sounds of the voice and in the tone of love, the mother cloaks her eloquence. Through speech, the soul of the child will develop, and as light enters his understanding, warmth will enter his heart.

Learning to Walk:

Learning to walk is no less important for the child than learning to talk. Here also the chief rule is to treat the blind child like a normal human being, for it is his nature to make the most of his accomplishments. If the blind child is strong enough to make walking feasible, he should no longer be carried. He has to learn to use his feet like every other child, and like every other child, he has to be taught with care and patience. Of course the blind child needs the helping hand much more. He must be guided more and for a longer time. However, one should not hold him in tutelage any longer than necessary, and one should bear in mind the important factor that the blind must be taken away from the teaching of the seeing. The great dependence of the blind on others is one of the things that makes most for their unhappiness. The more he can do without this assistance, the more he can help himself, the closer will he be brought to the world of the seeing, the less will he feel his weakness, and the better chance will he have for contentment and well-being. His senses are awakened by stimuli from the outside, and developed by practice, and this practice must be continued. The more promptly the beginning is made, the more surely and com-

pletely will the important goal be reached. To further this end much erudition is not needed, especially during the early years. Patience and good-will are much more important. The means to be used during the tender years of the child lie so near and are so simple that mother-love hardly needs any advice concerning them. As soon as the blind child is able to stand alone without support he should be persuaded to do without the hand that guides him. He must stand alone without fear, and walk a few steps alone, following the sound of the voice only, in a place where it can not bump into something and fall. When this point is reached, one makes the child gradually acquainted with the room. Let him go around the table, lead him along the walls, show him the oven, the doors, the windows, the important furniture, let him hunt for first one and then another thing in the room, from a certain place, and when he has found it, let him find his way back alone to his starting point.

Thus one lays the foundation for the so important sense of direction. It is necessary to show the child how high he must lift his legs and how to set them down again so as to form the best habits. Also the child must become early accustomed to hold the left arm in front of its face, so as to protect it against collision, but not both hands because the right one has to be used for carrying later. The blind person will early take upon himself the habit of violently protecting himself and will walk with the left shoulder a bit ahead especially when he is carrying something in his right arm. This has the same effect as if he were carrying breakable things that he wanted to protect. Naturally he may not carry these things in front of him but to the side, being careful the while to use his left hand to protect against obstacles. Thus this somewhat unusual position develops by itself although it seems to be conditioned

by the carrying of objects.

When the blind child has become acquainted with his living room, he will do the same with other parts of the house as much as he can. One should lead him from place to place, always bringing him back to the well-known place from which he orients himself. One should call his attention to all sorts of landmarks that might help him and also he should be encouraged to find landmarks for himself. He should be shown the steps, his attention should be called to the balustrade on which he should be encouraged to climb up and down, and gradually as he becomes older he should only put one foot on the step at a time. The child should be made to pay close attention to the number of steps, and to count them every time he goes up or down. For safety's sake, a significant landmark could be put on the balustrade just before the last step, so as to make the child careful of the approaching end of the stairs. He also should be coached to climbing a ladder always under observation though. The success would increase the self-confidence of the little blind child, and this is the best protection against danger, while exaggerated anxiety increases the hazards. However, all openings into which the child might fall must be covered or barred.

When the child has become sufficiently familiar in the house, one can familiarize him with the immediate environment. His attention should also be called to the differences in the new surrounding so that the child can learn to associate the known with the unknown. He should go back and forth often and not go over to the new until he has, so to speak, gained ground, and has got a clear mental conception of the old environment. If the child possesses sufficient adroitness, one can make him acquainted with the town he lives in. He can be shown the roads, he has to take in order to ward certain dangers, and

There are three main parts to this paper. The first part is a review of the literature on the topic. The second part is a description of the data used in the study. The third part is a discussion of the results and their implications.

The first part of the paper is a review of the literature on the topic. There have been many studies on the effects of the environment on human health. Some of these studies have found that exposure to air pollution can lead to respiratory problems, heart disease, and even death. Other studies have found that exposure to noise can lead to stress, sleep problems, and even mental health problems. There is also a growing body of research on the effects of climate change on human health. Some of this research has found that climate change can lead to more frequent and severe weather events, which can cause injury and death. Other research has found that climate change can lead to changes in the distribution of diseases, such as malaria and dengue fever.

The second part of the paper is a description of the data used in the study. The data were obtained from the National Longitudinal Study of the Health and Retirement Survey. This is a large, nationally representative survey of the health and retirement status of Americans aged 50 and older. The survey includes information on a wide range of topics, including health, income, and social activities. The data for this study were obtained from the 2006 wave of the survey.

The third part of the paper is a discussion of the results and their implications. The results of the study show that exposure to air pollution is associated with a higher risk of mortality. This association is particularly strong for people who are exposed to high levels of air pollution. The results also show that exposure to noise is associated with a higher risk of mortality. This association is particularly strong for people who are exposed to high levels of noise. Finally, the results show that exposure to climate change is associated with a higher risk of mortality. This association is particularly strong for people who are exposed to high levels of climate change.

The implications of these results are that exposure to the environment can have a significant impact on human health. This suggests that it is important to take steps to reduce exposure to the environment. For example, we can reduce exposure to air pollution by using public transportation or carpooling. We can reduce exposure to noise by using earplugs or soundproofing our homes. We can reduce exposure to climate change by using energy-efficient appliances and reducing our carbon footprint.

his attention should be called to landmarks, so that he can find and recognize his starting point again. A little stick would now give the blind child good service. This stick he must carry towards the ground and in front of him, so that he can determine obstructions and road edges and more easily find his way. The blind child must get used to walking about half a foot behind his guide. This is better than if he were to take the arm of the guide and get used to too much guardianship which would preclude cooperation and independence on his side. One can teach the child very early to walk by himself on even and safe roads, only following the sound of his slowly walking guide. When crossing a bridge, one lets the blind child make himself familiar with its width by the help of his stick--also the direction must be considered.

He should not be allowed to lift his feet too high and should be made to put them carefully in front of him so as not to lose the feeling of the ground. When he has to step over a pit or climb over an obstruction, the blind child must familiarize himself through touch and investigation with the help of his stick and then decide how to come across this difficulty. He will thus feel more encouraged and sure in his movements. To advise the child to walk in streets that serve as a public thoroughfare, has its drawbacks and can not be advised. However, there is no hard and fast rule. The individuality and the nature of the child as well as of the place must be taken into account, but one must always take care to watch the child without his being aware of it. Blind child often has the habit of bending his body and especially his head forward as he can not observe others and can not copy their example, the danger of this posture should be pointed out to him. This excessive stooping can be

avoided by bending the knee and stretching one foot backwards, and thus a greater ability of posture ^{be} ~~is~~ induced. Here one can give him exercises where something is dropped near the child and he is asked to pick it up. When he sits down, the child must get used to feel the seat carefully with his hands so as to be sure that something lying on the ~~chair~~ would not be thrown down, or destroyed by a too hasty movement. One should encourage lively children to gentle careful motions so that they may not harm themselves or others through carelessness.

Use of the Hands:

The saddest mistake of parents of blind children is giving the children the idea that they can do nothing themselves, that they must always be waited on, dressed and undressed, washed, combed, fed, and persuaded to sit still continually. The opposite of all this should be the rule if the child is not to reach a state of impotency and misfitness, that can never be remedied in later years, making him incapable in all walks of life, and leading to conditions even worse than blindness. It is not seldom, that pupils are brought to the institutes of the blind, whose hands are so weak, that they are completely unfit for any use in the house or for any technical work. Such a poor creature can be compared with an armless cripple. Blind and armless--armless through the stupidity and laziness of his former teachers. The arms of such unhappy children are weak, the bones thin, covered with loose soft unmuscular flesh. The hands are small, thin and so lax in the joints as though they were hung with thread. With every movement of their arms, it is as if they were throwing foreign bodies back and forth, following only mechanical reactions, since the will is not trained to govern these most important tools of man's activities.

Without strain and without hurting the blind child, one can bend the fingers all the way back over the hand, or the hand the entire way back over the arm. They do not spring back, elastically, but fall mechanically according to their weight into their natural positions. These hands are no use in the matters of every day life, not even in a friendly handshake. They can hardly hold on to anything. It is even impossible to button and unbutton, or to lift and guide a spoon, without dropping food, or to wash one hand with the other. With what sort of hope for success can we introduce the poor creature to a knowledge of raised script, to the use of relief cards or to the use for the teaching material for the blind. How can he be taught any mechanical work, which could insure a living in the future. They remain born beggars. Their mind goes on through hearing, but only leads to greater comprehension of hopeless unhappiness. Experience has taught that all later attempts at building up this unability to use his hands is hopeless, and that later no art can make up for the practise and strengthening neglected in childhood. Through such a crippling of the hands, these people become a lifelong evidence upon the community, a weight on civil life, to which he can give no service, nor enter into any communion. In order to prevent such evil, one should above all, get rid of the sad idea that the blind must always be waited upon. On the contrary one should give the child directions, so that he may attain the various goals that are more simple for the seeing child. This takes time and patience. The mother would probably have completely dressed the child, in the time it would take for him to put on one stocking himself. But the child must be given time. He will not learn the strength of his hands with encouragement and will always stay in childish dependence and awkwardness, without the necessary enlightenment.

Games:

It is of greatest importance, therefore, to the future that the child be encouraged to use his hands from earliest childhood. The beginning must be made with games. It is a mistake for parents to think that the blind child has no pleasure from his playthings because he cannot see them. One should only choose things that stimulate his hearing, that are agreeable to his sense of touch, or so-called patience games invented to dispel his boredom, while they keep his fingers busy; which he can use himself and with which he can hurt neither himself nor others. For very little children, suitable toys are: a rattle, sleighbells, a handbell, a cuckoo, a ball and little animals with natural fur. For older children, one may use a fife, a harmonica, a drum, nine pins, tops, building blocks, bird pipes and jews' harps. Girls enjoy dolls with belongings, miniature furniture, and household things of wood, tin or pewter. Later the child can have games that have to be taken apart and put together; these are good for busy fingers and conducive to alertness of thought. Such games are Gordian knots of wood, ring games like the sticking of various wire rings over a prong, intricate knots. There are dice that have to be finished with wood, the dots consisting of pegs or brass nails. Dominoes are finished in the same way; the flat part is made of wood. The numbers of brass pegs and the lines between the numbers of fine wire. Other games that can be used are checkers, and backgammon, but the checker board has to be arranged somewhat differently, so that the checkers will not be pushed out of position. For this reason the white fields should be lower than the black. The checkers must be distinguished not by their colors but by their shape, so that half of them should be smooth and the other part roughly finished. Also every checker must have in the middle of one side a projecting peg and in the middle of the other

side a corresponding hole, so the checkers can be fastened together. On the backgammon board it is sufficient that the difference between the position of the "men" be indicated by wooden pegs, which will also prevent their being misplaced. There is nothing to state concerning the "Mill game" except that at the crossing point of the lines, where the wooden pieces are placed, there should be fairly big hollows for the pieces, to prevent their sliding around. A very good game for blind people is cricket, which can be played by a blind person entirely alone. One should choose a game board with holes, in which the fingers may be placed. With very few changes, the board with its figures, may be used for the Fortress game, of which the blind are very fond, and which is as good for the development of alertness of mind as the game of draughts.

Another excellent game for the blind child is the throwing of rings at a hook. This game is played with an iron ring that is fashioned to a string that is hanging from the ceiling. This ring when swinging, falls on a hook that is attached to the wall. One merely shows the blind child where to stand and how to hold his hand in throwing the ring, and he will know how to go on himself with the game.

The blind can also learn chess and card games, the last under special direction with seeing players. However, these two games are not suitable for children and are only mentioned here.

Then there is a peculiarly fitting game for blind children--the modelling of all sorts of things out of wax. This play is not only entertaining but trains the fingers and clarifies their outlook, trains the fingers and clarifies their outlook on the outside world. One only tells the child superficially how the wax gets soft from the warmth of the hand, and what different things can be made out of it, but soon he will be making all kinds of things, the forms

of which he is familiar with, a ball, a die, a bench, a chair, a table, candles, etc. in miniature. It is so important to always be giving the child some constructive work, that passes the time for him and employs his potential strength, It is so important to prevent him from melancholy brooding, and to wake him up to consciousness. It is no less important not to condemn the poor creature to sitting still in the stuffy unhealthy air of a room. Only too often blind children suffer from scrofula. There is nothing more conducive to this sickness than damp, used up, indoor air. Under these circumstances it is clear that the breathing apparatus of blind children due to the rest which is forced upon them through the important development period, stays weak and undeveloped. What wonder that gradually, deadly sicknesses fall upon the delicate organs of the lungs and form growths or tubercles, so that every little cold throws itself upon the diseased organ and develops into inflammation of the lungs. Thus the germ is formed, out of which sooner or later tuberculosis develops, that only too often makes a confirmed invalid of the unfortunate one.

The seeing child does not let such slavery overcome it, and it does not occur to an yone to force on him — such an unnatural existence. The rays of the sun, the warm spring air, the cool tree shadows, the green lawn, a thousand charming nature voices, lure the child into the free outdoors as soon as he can move his feet to walk. He disports himself gaily in the lively little world that surrounds him, he builds his strength and life material through sheer movement, and drinks in the fresh balsam of the air that is the best and most natural preventative against every illness that might gnaw like a poison worm on the tender roots of life.

The poor blind child hears in his dull prison the happy voices of his seeing comrades. He, too, wants to spread his wings and fly, but he does not dare. Confined to his chair he sinks into deep brooding. His spirit remains cloaked in darkness, just as his sight, and like a fading houseplaid behind the window, his physical development is pitiful, and insufficient.

Therefore, fathers and mothers of blind children, do not shut up your children in the cell-like atmosphere of your rooms. Just like a plant without light and sun, the child must die and suffer from that. Lead him out into free nature, let him lie with other children, let him take part in their innocent games, in their childish gaiety; let him even romp about with them, as long as he can do it without harm. Nothing is more conducive to his development and alertness than companionship with his own kind. Through play, he becomes familiar with their accomplishments, their conceptions, and their speech, and his progress is greater when it is done according to patterns instead of mere instructions. Give to the blind children, seeing companions, perhaps a bit older, a bit taller, and above all, good kind children who recognize the duty of being protectors of the blind, and who will guard them from the teasing of misunderstanding playmates. This will excite his ambition to act like seeing children. The child will be encouraged to pull himself out of little difficulties. It will give him many more points of view as to the outside world than any amount of calculated instructions. It will also be good for his disposition to make and receive friendship. One should not prevent the companionship of the blind child with his seeing brothers and sisters nor with another blind child that might be *about*. However, companionship of the blind with the blind only leads to onesidedness. The give and take of the blind with strangers is

much more stimulating. But one should choose only wellbred, kind playmates for the blind child, and dispense with all rough careless elements. The auditory world makes much more impression on the tender mind of the blind child, than it does on that of the normal one. Often the impressions that are made on his spirit in the earliest years, are ineradicable through all his life. This is enough warning to suppress all rough, careless speech in his hearing, so as not to besmirch his soul through his all too retentive memory.

